AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

1.   (currently amended)   A method for processing a futures contract comprising:

defining an eroding futures contract involving a single futures contract having a defined size and a plurality of defined final settlement events, wherein the contract specifies a period of time over which the plurality of defined final settlement events are scheduled to occur;

executing trades between buyers and sellers of the eroding futures contract on a regulated exchange, wherein the eroding futures contract has an initial margin associated therewith; and

upon occurrence of one of the final settlement events, finally settling part of the futures contract, wherein the initial margin changes as a result of the finally settling of part of the futures contract.

2.   (original)   The method of claim 1 further comprising executing trades involving a remaining balance of the eroding futures contract which has not finally settled.

3.   (original)   The method of claim 1 further comprising clearing a finally settled portion of the eroding futures contract after a defined final settlement event.

4.   (original)   The method of claim 1 further comprising generating reports reflecting activity related to the trading, settlement and final settlement of the eroding futures contract.

5.   (original)   The method of claim 1 wherein the defined period corresponds to a specific week.

6.   (original)   The method of claim 1 wherein the defined period corresponds to a specific month.

7.   (original)   The method of claim 1 wherein finally settling comprises reducing an open position value of the contract by an amount equal to a quantity of the contract that was finally settled.

8.   (original)   The method of claim 1 wherein the eroding futures contract comprises a plurality of component contracts and finally settling comprises reducing an open position value of the contract by an amount equal to a quantity of contracts that were finally settled.

9.   (original)   The method of claim 1 wherein each final settlement event occurs at a contract-specified settlement time and a final settlement occurs at each settlement time.

10.   (original)   The method of claim 1 wherein the eroding futures contract is a fixed quantity futures contract.

11.   (original)   The method of claim 1 wherein the eroding futures contract is a variable quantity futures contract.

12.   (currently amended)   A method for mitigating risk related to price volatility of a commodity comprising:

establishing a futures position involving a single futures contract traded on a regulated exchange wherein the futures contract specifies a starting size, a settlement period, and a specified delivery location, wherein the defined settlement period covers a range of time, and wherein the futures contract has an initial margin associated therewith; and

during the defined settlement period, finally settling a portion of the variable quantity single futures contract, wherein if the variable quantity single futures contract remains open, a changed initial margin is associated therewith.

13.   (original)   The method of claim 12 further comprising clearing the finally settled portion of the futures contracts.

14.   (original)   The method of claim 12 further comprising trading an unsettled balance of the finally settled portion of the single futures contract.

15.   (original)   The method of claim 12 wherein the defined period comprises a specific week.

16.   (original)   The method of claim 12 wherein the defined period comprises a specific month.

17.   (original)   The method of claim 12 wherein the act of finally settling comprises cash settlement.

18.   (original)   The method of claim 12 wherein the act of finally settling comprises physical delivery.

19-25. (cancelled)